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Six of every 10 Arkansans are overweight or obese

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If you have Dunlap's Disease (that's when your belly "done lapped" over your belt) or you need a shoehorn to slip into last season's size 12, you're part of a big group. More than half of the adults in this state are overweight or obese, according to a recent survey conducted for the Arkansas Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. That's well up from the one-third of too-heavy adults found in Arkansas in 1993.

Overweight is defined here as having a Body Mass Index between 25 and 29.9 and obesity is defined as having a BMI of 30 or higher. (See BMI Index Table, page 3)

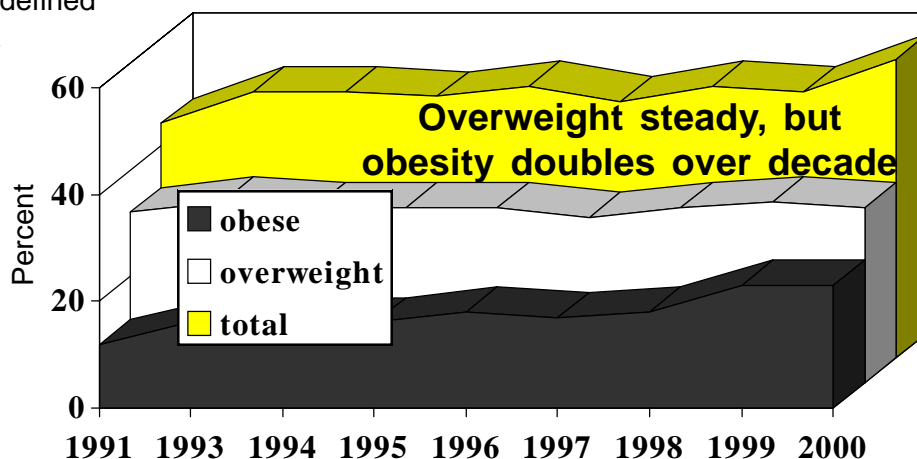
While the percentage of

Arkansans who are overweight has remained fairly constant for the last 10 years, the percentage of obese Arkansans has nearly doubled. The total number of Arkansans who are either overweight or obese has increased roughly 34 percent since 1991.

By now, most people know that being overweight is more than a matter of looking good; it is a predictor of good health. It can be a matter of life and death.

About 300,000 Americans die each year from obesity-related illnesses, according to the CDC.

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Inside:

See if you are overweight or obese
Check the Body Mass Index Table

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Obesity has been linked to heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and stroke, among other diseases.

In this state, we have more than our "fair share" of such deaths, since 58 percent of adult Arkansans were overweight or obese, according to the 2000 Arkansas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS.) Only Alabama, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi and Puerto Rico had a higher percentage of overweight residents. As bad as that sounds, it actually represents an improvement over 1999, when only two states had a higher prevalence of overweight.

Nearly two-thirds of Arkansas men were either overweight or obese.

Half of the state's women were overweight or obese, which is good compared to the men, but poor compared to the rest of the country, where only Louisiana, Alabama and Puerto Rico had a higher prevalence.

Nearly 80 percent of the adult Arkansans sampled in the scientific survey

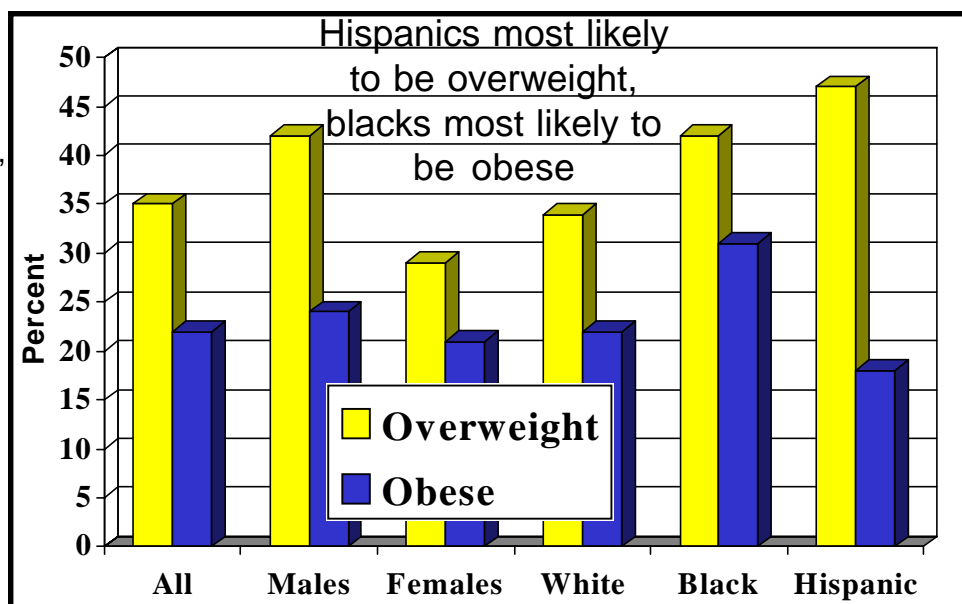
said they didn't engage in regular, sustained exercise. That puts Arkansas nearly at the U.S. median in that category. This time 21 other states had a worse record.

Do those numbers reflect Arkansans aiming for a healthy weight and trying to be more physically active? Judge for yourself. Forty-two percent of Arkansans were trying to lose weight and 58 percent of Arkansans were trying to maintain or keep from gaining weight in 2000. This was up from 1998 when 31 percent were trying to lose weight and 49 percent were trying to maintain or keep from gaining weight in 2000. Of those who were trying to lose weight, only 29 percent were

not eating fewer calories and less fat toward achieving that objective. However this number is constant with that of 1999. Fifty-eight percent of those trying to lose weight or keep from gaining weight were using physical activity or exercise to do so. This was up six percent from the 1998.

Health care professionals suggest that we should watch our weight, eat healthily--more fruits & vegetables and less fat--and exercise to keep from becoming a statistic. How are Arkansans doing when it comes to following these health care professionals' advice?

Although nearly 60 percent of Arkansans are overweight, only 11 percent said they



had been advised by their health care professional to lose weight. Eighty-five percent said they had not been given any advice about their weight by a doctor, nurse or other health professional in the previous year.

"For the majority of adults who don't smoke and don't drink excessively, diet is the most significant controllable risk affecting long-term health," according to Carole Garner, state nutrition director.

Medical researchers estimate that the cost of obesity in this country exceeds \$100 billion annually.

While there is strong evidence suggesting

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Body Mass Index (BMI) Table

	Overweight											Obese					
BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
Height							Weight (in pounds)										
4'10" (58")	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148	153	158	162	167
4'11" (59")	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173
5' (60")	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	174	179
5'1" (61")	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185
5'2" (62")	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191
5'3" (63")	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197
5'4" (64")	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204
5'5" (65")	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210
5'6" (66")	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216
5'7" (67")	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223
5'8" (68")	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230
5'9" (69")	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236
5'10" (70")	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243
5'11" (71")	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250
6' (72")	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258
6'1" (73")	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	235	242	250	257	265
6'2" (74")	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	241	249	256	264	272
6'3" (75")	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	248	256	264	272	279

Source: Evidence Report of Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, 1998. NIH/National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

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that many of us have a genetic predisposition toward obesity, a strong link also has been established between obesity, diet and a sedentary life style. Genetics certainly doesn't explain the doubling in obesity prevalence in 10 years. Studies in Africa showed that as cultures evolved from rigorous hunting, gathering and farming societies to more industrialized, more sedentary ones, obesity increased, as did obesity-related diseases.

Healthy eating and regular physical activity help us be more productive at work, live more enjoyable lives and ultimately feel our best.

Overweight people are 88-97 percent more likely to develop Type II Diabetes, and a third more likely to develop hypertension.

Overweight people are 57-70 percent more likely to get heart disease. Experts attribute 10 percent of all colon cancers to

obesity. Seventy percent of gallstones in women are attributable to obesity and overweight people are 600 percent more likely to develop arthritic knees.

The health odds are stacked against the 60 percent of us who are overweight or obese. Shouldn't we be doing something?

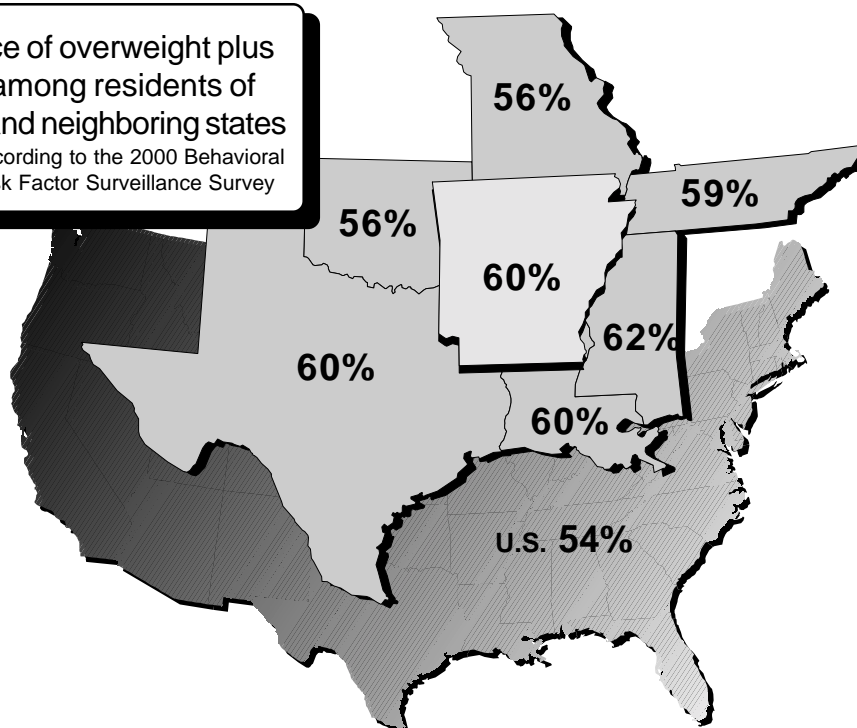
To see how Arkansas compares to its neighbors, see graphic on page 4.



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Prevalence of overweight plus
obesity among residents of
Arkansas and neighboring states
according to the 2000 Behavioral
Risk Factor Surveillance Survey



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